

Steps to Quality

A participant handbook for Idaho's quality rating and improvement system for home- and center-based childcare



Supporting Idaho's childcare to provide a setting where all children can thrive

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What is Steps to Quality?



Steps to Quality (STQ) is a quality rating and improvement system for Idaho's home- and center-based child care programs. Think of STQ as a tool that, when blended with coaching from your regional multidisciplinary team, helps support and measure the growth of quality in your program.

What's a regional multidisciplinary team, or MDT? Those are the members of your local IdahoSTARS Child Care Resource Center, including Resource Specialists, Health Consultants, and Quality Consultants. They are your partners in engaging in the Steps to Quality process. They will support you in learning about and implementing best practices for childcare.

The goal of Steps to Quality is to help Idaho's childcare programs provide a setting where all children thrive. Your regional MDT will partner with you to get there and stay there.

In Steps to Quality, a program evolves as it moves from participating to Steps 1-6. A successful program maintains the quality indicators of the previous steps while striving for verification at a higher step. Step 3 programs are STAR-rated, meaning they have reached a base level of high quality. Programs at Steps 3-6 are recognized as high-quality early care and education programs in Idaho.

Steps to Quality is a program of IdahoSTARS. IdahoSTARS is committed to:

- Increasing the qualifications of Idaho's early care and education professionals.
- Increasing quality practices in Idaho's early care and education programs.
- Building knowledge of, and investment in, high-quality early care and education.
- Increasing the number of families participating in ICCP who enroll their child in high-quality early care and education programs.



Children benefit from high-quality early care and education. Steps to Quality, along with supportive coaching from your regional MDT, helps grow high-quality early care and education across the state of Idaho.

Participation in STQ is one of the best choices your childcare program can make to demonstrate your commitment to quality. Together, we can make sure Idaho's childcare programs provide settings where all children thrive.

Why Should My Program Participate?

Participating in STQ links your program to a network of supports that focus on you and the growth of quality in your child care program.

Participation in Steps to Quality offers your program:

- A multidisciplinary team of coaches, including Quality Consultants, Health Consultants, and Resource Specialists.
- Coaching that includes collaborative partnership, joint planning, focused observation, and reflection-and-feedback.
- An opportunity to build knowledge and skills for teachers in your program to help them develop quality practices.
- Targeted Technical Assistance to help you and your team learn, implement, and reflect on new skills and improvements to your practice.
- Access to the Environment Rating Scales, a nationally-recognized assessment, and other tools, such as the Strengthening Families protective factors, the NAEYC Human Resources Training, an Inclusion Readiness Checklist, and business practice tools such as the Program/Business Administration Scale.
- Promotion of your hard work and movement through the steps on IdahoSTARS.org and through the IdahoSTARS child care referral process.
- Annual financial recognition for Steps 3-6 aimed at acknowledging your hard work in providing quality care, caring for our most vulnerable children, and supporting professional development in the field. *
- Access to grant opportunities that can help take your program from a focus on quality improvement to a focus on national accreditation. *

*Financial recognition for programs enrolled in STQ is limited to those providing care for children birth-12 years old while their caregiver is at work or school. Head Starts and preschool-only programs serving children in a more limited capacity are eligible for all non-monetary support.

What is the Process?

Steps to Quality is designed so your program can participate on your schedule. Your program can be anywhere from Participating to Steps 1-6 as long as you demonstrate active participation as outlined in the participation criteria (page 19). Active participation includes such things as working closely with your regional multidisciplinary team, engaging in the coaching process, creating meaningful action plans, and participating in verification and confirmation visits. Your program must maintain compliance with STQ Eligibility and Participation Criteria at all times (page 19).

Regional MDT Coaching and Quality Improvement Action Plans

As a Steps to Quality program, you will receive coaching support from a range of high-quality early childhood professionals. Coaching from the Resource Specialists, Health Consultants and Quality Consultants in your region will include collaborative partnership, joint planning, focused observation, and reflection-and-feedback. As a participating program, you will work closely with regional MDT coaches. Through the coaching relationship, you will develop Quality Improvement Action Plans (“action plans”) for your program. Action plans document goals related to the needs of your program and track progress toward meeting those goals. It is in meeting these improvement goals that your program can begin to see how you might be ready to verify in one of the 6 steps of STQ.

Step Verification

To get established at a step, or to move from one step to the next, your program works with your quality consultant to apply for a step verification in RISE.

A step verification:

- Verifies that all indicators in the current step are met.
- Verifies that all previous steps are met.
- Verifies all required documentation.
- Is completed by your consultant at Steps 1 and 6.
- Is completed by a contracted verifier at Steps 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Annual Confirmation

The month in which you verify for the very first time is designated as your anniversary month. Each year following your first verification will be an annual confirmation during your anniversary month. This confirms the quality indicators you last verified are still in practice one

year later, and each year after that. This annual confirmation keeps the system fair and accurate for parents and participants.

The annual confirmation visit is conducted by your Quality Consultant in Step 1. In Steps 2-5, it will be conducted by a contracted Steps to Quality verifier. In Step 6, programs show proof of a current accreditation (NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, or NAFCC accreditation or Head Start), update staff list in RISE, and any additional requirements.

Mid-year Verification at a Higher Step

Instead of an annual confirmation, a program may choose to verify at a higher step at any point between two anniversaries. For example, if your anniversary month is January and you verify at a higher step in August, you will get to skip your next annual confirmation the following January in place of your verification at a higher step in August. In this way, the time between any two verification or confirmation visits can range from 12-23 months.

What are the Steps?

The steps in STQ range from Participating - Step 6 and provide a framework for understanding how quality practice looks as it grows. **A program becomes STAR-rated when it is verified in Step 3.** While this is not the highest step, a STAR rating shows that the program is practicing at a strong and growing level of quality childcare.

Each of the six steps in STQ is designed around the following quality domains:

Health, Safety, and Wellness

Program provides an environment that establishes healthy habits, reduces the risk of injury, promotes nutrition, and supports the emotional and social well-being of children.

Business Practices

Program owners and directors manage a sound business, including written policies and effective accounting practices, while also developing a program philosophy and supporting the professional development of their teaching staff.

Child Development

The program fosters the multitude of ways a young child grows, including social development, language, thinking, and physical movement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The program understands the importance of positive teacher-child interactions, ongoing child assessments, and individualized teaching and learning as the keys to a loving and strong educational foundation.

Environments

The program provides a positive, intentional learning environment with a clear routine, a carefully considered room arrangement, and a variety of developmentally appropriate materials.

Inclusion and Diversity

The program embeds access, participation, and supports for the successful participation of children with diverse abilities.

Partnerships with Families and Communities

The program builds trusting and collaborative relationships with families to build family strengths and support children's learning and development, embracing all abilities, cultures, and backgrounds.

Step 1

Anchoring the roots of quality care and education in your child care program.



<i>Quality Domains</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Health, Safety, and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program gathers information on immunizations for individual children. • Teachers* and Directors** have current pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR. • All staff*** annually review the guidelines for recognizing child abuse and neglect.
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program meets the requirements for either state or city child care licensing. • Program is not disqualified from being an ICCP vendor. • Program has a RISE account and maintains a current and complete Staff List and Classrooms tab. • Teachers and Directors are in the IdahoSTARS PDS Registry. • 50% or more of all Teachers and Directors have a minimum of a current CDA, or 12 ECE credits, or have completed 20 hours of training/targeted technical assistance in the prior 12 months. • Program completes a Quality Improvement Action Plan annually.
Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.
Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.
Inclusion and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.
Partnerships with Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.

* Teachers are any individuals in a center- or home-based program who work 15 or more hours a week, provide direct care to children, and do not have a job title indicating a Director role.

** Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director or any individuals in a home-based program with the job title of Director, Group Provider or Family Provider who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

*** Staff are any individuals on the program’s Staff List in RISE, regardless of number of hours worked per week or if direct care is provided.

Unless otherwise noted, indicators apply to both center- and home-based programs.

Step 2

Growing and building upon a budding foundation of quality to ensure solid early care experiences.



<i>Quality Domains</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Health, Safety, and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Child Care Health Consultant visits once a year. • Items from the Safe Sleep Checklist are observed in practice. • Parent and Staff Handbooks both include a policy for preventing child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse.
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% or more of all Teachers* and Directors** have a minimum of a current CDA, or 12 ECE credits, or have completed 20 hours of training/targeted technical assistance in the prior 12 months and have completed the ERS training (if ERS training completed in the prior 12 months, hours can be included in the 20 hours of training). • Center Directors*** complete NAEYC Human Resources Management Training (if completed in the prior 12 months, hours can be included in the 20 hours of training). • Staff Handbook is maintained on-site, with policies, procedures, job duties, and responsibilities. • Parent Handbook is maintained on-site, with policies and procedures around the daily operations of the program management.
Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements at this step.
Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Rating Scale (ERS) assessment completed.
Inclusion and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and resources specific to each community are available to families.
Partnerships with Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program communicates with families in a variety of ways. • The Strengthening Families Self-Assessment is completed annually.

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***Center Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

Unless otherwise noted, indicators apply to both center- and home-based programs.

To verify at Step 2 must, a program must meet the indicators in this step and previous step.

Step 3

STAR-Rated. Celebrating and cultivating a strong and growing level of quality childcare that is recognized by the state of Idaho.



<i>Quality Domains</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Health, Safety, and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors** are trained and use Idaho’s Immunization Reminder Information System (IRIS). • Items from the Nutrition and Active Physical Play Checklist of Practice are observed in practice. • Items from the Thinking Active Physical Pay Inventory are observed in practice. • Each classroom or home-based group completes a Food and Nutrition Vision and Action Plan annually. • Each classroom or home-based group completes an Active Physical Play Vision and Action Plan annually.
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% or more of all Teachers* and Directors have a minimum of a current CDA, or 12 ECE credits, or have completed 20 hours of training/targeted technical assistance in the prior 12 months and have completed the ERS training (if ERS training completed in the prior 12 months, hours can be included in the 20 hours of training). • Center Directors*** have a high school diploma or GED. • Center Directors have 15 hours of approved business management training on record within the past 10 years (in addition to the above training requirements). • Directors complete the Business/Program Administration Scale self-assessment annually.
Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and Staff Handbook both include a guidance policy that reflects positive responsive practice.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-based group ratio includes children equaling no more than 12 points with no more than four infants for each Teacher/Director. • Program formally documents each child's progress.
Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERS assessment meets minimum overall and interaction scores.
Inclusion and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and Staff Handbook both include an inclusion statement. • Staff**** agree to practice confidentiality as outlined in the program's confidentiality statement.
Partnerships with Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communication system provides regular opportunities for connecting parents with Teachers and Directors. • Social and educational events and opportunities to volunteer are provided for families.

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** Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director or any individuals in a home-based program with the job title of Director, Group Provider or Family Provider who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

***Center Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

****Staff are any individuals on the program’s Staff List in RISE, regardless of number of hours worked per week or if direct care is provided.

Unless otherwise noted, indicators apply to both center- and home-based programs.

To verify at Step 3 must, a program must meet the indicators in this step and all previous steps.

Step 4

Maturing and sustaining a vibrant understanding and implementation of quality childcare and business practices.



<i>Quality Domains</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Health, Safety, and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health information from a recognized health organization is available for parents.
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% or more of all Teachers* and Directors** have a minimum of a current CDA, or 12 ECE credits, or have completed 20 hours of training/targeted technical assistance in the prior 12 months and have completed the ERS training (if ERS training completed in the prior 12 months, hours can be included in the 20 hours of training). Center Directors*** have 30 hours of approved business management training on record within the past 10 years (in addition to the above training requirements). Directors complete the Business/Program Administration Scale Action Plan annually.
Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and lesson plans for each classroom or home-based group are posted.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home-based group ratio includes children equaling no more than 11 points and no more than three infants for each Teacher/Director. Center-based classrooms with children ages 0-24 months maintain an adult-child ratio of 1:5 and a group size of 10.
Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERS assessment meets minimum overall and interaction scores.
Inclusion and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion Readiness Checklist is completed for each classroom annually.
Partnerships with Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program partners with families and/or agencies to support children’s retention and success. One parent-teacher conference is offered during the year. Parents and staff**** have an annual opportunity to give the program feedback.

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** Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director or any individuals in a home-based program with the job title of Director, Group Provider or Family Provider who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

***Center Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

****Staff are any individuals on the program’s Staff List in RISE, regardless of number of hours worked per week or if direct care is provided.

Unless otherwise noted, indicators apply to both center- and home-based programs.

To verify at Step 4 must, a program must meet the indicators in this step and all previous steps.

Step 5

Thriving as a childcare business and nurturing all children with quality early care and education experiences.



<i>Quality Domains</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Health, Safety, and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program hosts one health and safety class for children, parents and/or staff**** annually.
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% or more of all Teachers* and Directors** have a minimum of a current CDA or 12 ECE credits and have completed the ERS training. • Center Directors*** have 45 hours of approved business management training on record within the past 10 years.
Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy and numeracy activities are incorporated into daily activity plans.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-based group ratio includes children equaling no more than 10 points and no more than two infants for each Teacher/Director. • Center-based classrooms meet NAEYC guidelines for ratio and group size. • Weekly documentation of each child’s progress in daily routines is on file.
Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERS assessment meets minimum overall and interaction scores.
Inclusion and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Inclusion Plans are completed with families for children with diverse abilities in each classroom annually.
Partnerships with Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families have opportunities to participate in program development. • Two parent-teacher conferences are offered during the year. • Protective Factors are referenced in strategic planning, program evaluation, and staff and parent engagement.

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***Center Directors are any individuals in a center-based program with the job title of Director who work 15 or more hours a week and provide direct care to children.

****Staff are any individuals on the program’s Staff List in RISE, regardless of number of hours worked per week or if direct care is provided.

Unless otherwise noted, indicators apply to both center- and home-based programs.

To verify at Step 5 must, a program must meet the indicators in this step and all previous steps.

Step 6

Firmly rooted in quality, achieving accreditation standards that meet the highest requirements for quality care and education.



<i>Quality Domains</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Health, Safety, and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.
Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.
Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.
Inclusion and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.
Partnerships with Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is NAEYC, AMS, IMC, AMI, NECPA, NAFCC or Head Start accredited.

In RISE, programs at this step must have an approved accreditation certificate uploaded, must request a verification for initial step placement and a confirmation for each anniversary month after that, and must maintain a complete and current Staff List and Classrooms tab.

The Environment Rating Scales

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are a program assessment tool that is used within the STQ rating scale. ERS assessments are conducted to help with verification and confirmation at steps 2-5. The ERS is done by a reliable network of trained assessors across the state of Idaho. Information from the ERS assessment is used to reflect on the work of your program and to set goals in your action plans. Steps to Quality conducts one complimentary ERS assessment or set of assessments during each of your program's annual cycles for steps 2-5.

ERS assessment results are valid for **6 months** after the results are uploaded into RISE. Your quality consultant will also meet with you to review your results. Expired ERS assessments cannot be used for step verification or confirmation. If ERS assessment results are expired and a program wants to request verification at a higher step, assessments can be purchased by the program.

Scheduling an Assessment

You will work with your Consultant to identify the best time to request ERS assessments for either a step verification or annual confirmation. Once you are ready, you will apply for the ERS assessment through RISE. Your assessment will occur before your anniversary month (the month in which you verify or confirm your step) or before verification at a higher step. It is your responsibility to contact the Consultant and/or the STQ Assessment Coordinator if circumstances arise and the scheduled assessment cannot be conducted, such as a family emergency, or if the only infant enrolled cancels for the day.

Important Assessment Information

If ERS assessment results expire, or if the ERS assessment results do not meet minimum required scores for the overall and interaction subscales (in Steps 3-5), step progression may be delayed. Your program will receive specific technical assistance to address lower scores. Your program will be eligible to receive another ERS assessment again during your next annual cycle and can report on progress in your action plans.

If an assessor attempts to conduct an ERS assessment twice and the assessment cannot be conducted, your program may be removed from Steps to Quality. If an ERS Assessor arrives and cannot conduct the ERS assessment, your program may be charged a \$75 rescheduling fee.

Appeals

A program can appeal ERS assessment results through the quality consultant, who will submit an ERS Assessment Appeal. Programs have **30 days** from the day the results of the assessment are available in RISE to submit an appeal.

Assessments for Centers

- The assessments used include:
 - ITERS-R: Infant/Toddler ERS-Revised
 - ECERS-R: Early Childhood ERS-Revised
 - SACERS-U: School Age Classroom ERS-Updated
- When an ERS assessment is conducted in a center, up to 50% of classrooms are selected using the ERS Selection Criteria.
- For the SACERS-U, the classroom must be providing at least 2.5 hours of continuous care.
- Assessment can only be conducted in classrooms with more than one child in attendance.
- ERS assessments are conducted only on classrooms experiencing a typical day, meaning with the regular teachers and the regular routines. If it is not a typical day, another classroom will be chosen at random.

Assessment for Home-based Providers

- The assessment used is the:
 - FCCERS-R: Family Child Care ERS- Revised
- When an ERS assessment is conducted in a home-based program, the entire group is assessed at one time.
- This assessment can only be conducted if there is more than one child in attendance and, if an infant is enrolled, the infant is in attendance.

ERS Selection Criteria located at the back of the handbook.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the MDT?

The multidisciplinary team, or MDT, is a group of high-quality early childhood professionals in your region, including Resource Specialists, Health Consultants, and Quality Child Care Consultants. These professionals come together from their variety of disciplines, or roles, to form a team (the multidisciplinary team). These individuals are employed by IdahoSTARS at your local CCRC and work alongside you in your Steps to Quality journey. The MDT in your region supports you in growing the quality of your early care and education program.

2. Can you tell me more about the coaching process?

Steps to Quality programs receive coaching support from your local MDT. Coaching includes developing a collaborative partnership, engaging in joint planning, allowing for focused observation, and growing from the reflection-and-feedback opportunity provided by your MDT. This 4-step model is an ongoing process that is designed to help you improve the quality of care provided in your early care and education program.

3. How do I get my program step-rated?

Programs first work with their MDT coaches to determine the program's quality improvement goals and develop action plans. It is within this coaching relationship that a program will begin to see where their hard work might fit into a step in STQ. Once your program and MDT are ready, you apply in RISE to verify your program at a certain step (Steps 2-5 require an ERS assessment before step verification).

The month you are verified in at your first step becomes your anniversary month. Following your first verification, your program has an annual confirmation to confirm the quality indicators you last verified at are still in practice. You can also choose to verify at a higher step any time mid-year before your anniversary month and skip your annual confirmation.

4. What is the difference between a step verification and an annual confirmation?

A step verification is when your program attempts to be verified at your first step or is attempting to verify at a step higher than your current step.

An annual confirmation is an annual visit to confirm that your program is still meeting all the indicators of your current step.

5. Why is STQ requiring my program to have an annual confirmation every year even though I've already been verified at a step?

This helps maintain the integrity of the system, identify system and provider concerns early, and support consistent verification practices. IdahoSTARS has done extensive research on other quality rating and improvement systems across the country and those that are the most successful conduct an annual verification for all programs.

Every year, your program's placement in STQ is confirmed during your anniversary month through an annual confirmation visit. This annual visit will verify that your program meets all indicators in your current step, as well as all indicators of each previous step.

Instead of an annual confirmation, your program may choose to verify at a higher step at any point between two anniversaries. For example, if your anniversary month is January and you verify at a higher step in August, you will skip your next annual confirmation in January in place of your verification at a higher step in August.

6. What happens if my program does not pass the annual confirmation visit or a step verification?

If indicators at your current step are not verified during your annual confirmation, your program moves to the last step in which all the indicators can be verified. How your program is recognized for your quality improvement efforts will be adjusted accordingly.

If indicators are not able to be verified when attempting to move up a step (step verification), your program will remain in the step in which you are currently verified.

Verification and confirmation provide valuable feedback about quality in your program. This feedback, combined with coaching and setting quality improvement goals, will help you target the areas of quality you would like to improve. Verifying at a higher step can occur anytime you and your coach feel you are ready.

7. Are there any special considerations for accredited childcare programs?

Step 6 is designed for programs with an IdahoSTARS recognized accreditation (such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) and Head Start Programs.

Programs in Step 6 are required to provide some documentation in addition to accreditation, such as updating your staff in RISE. NAFCC accredited programs will be required to meet additional ratio and group size standards.

8. Can you help me understand the professional development and training requirements for STQ? It seems like a lot of work!

IdahoSTARS recognizes that quality interactions between teachers and children are one of the best ways to promote quality in a childcare setting. This fact has helped drive decisions regarding the indicators in the Business Practices quality standard.

Notable facts about this standard include:

- The education and training indicators will apply to all staff who work 15 hours or more a week and provide direct care to children.
- Staff can choose to complete any 20 hours of IdahoSTARS-approved training of her or his choice. An excellent way to gain these hours is to follow the Essential Training. IdahoSTARS has identified key education and knowledge areas that promote quality childcare and designed the Essential Training to promote these areas. Staff can also combine training hours with targeted technical assistance hours to reach the 20-hour requirement.
- Training hours from the PRIOR 12 months are calculated for each teacher and director.
- Instead of annual training hours, staff can use a current CDA or 12 or more credits in Early Childhood Education.
- Directors play a very important role in ensuring quality within a program. Steps to Quality center directors and Family and Group Providers are required to have a High School Diploma or equivalent to be STAR-rated. Directors of centers must also have additional business management training.

9. Staff turnover in childcare programs can be high. What accommodations has STQ made for this issue, especially in the area of professional development?

Professional Development Action Plans (PDAPs) are an important part of Steps to Quality. PDAPs will be accepted for up to 50 percent of your program's staff in place of all staff meeting the required indicator. The PDAP must be specific and detail the staff member's intent to meet the required professional development in the step within a specific time frame.

10. Can you tell me more about the CDA requirements?

IdahoSTARS is placing an emphasis on providers obtaining a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). Important information to remember includes:

- The CDA must be current to be recognized by IdahoSTARS.
- A provider pursuing the CDA must document it in their Professional Development Plan, with a clear completion date for coursework and CDA assessment.
- A provider has 18 months to earn their CDA (this applies to providers working for a program in Step 5).

11. What if my program is a Head Start or preschool-only program, not a childcare facility?

Regardless of your program's structure, you are eligible to enroll in STQ and participate in coaching and quality improvement. However, not all programs are eligible for the financial recognition available through STQ.

- Head Starts, eligible for a Step 6 rating, may find consulting with your region's MDT useful but are not required for eligibility. Head Start facilities are not eligible for financial recognition through STQ.
- Preschool-only (or part-day) programs, or those serving children in a capacity other than while the child's caregiver is at work or school, can also benefit from the coaching and tools built into STQ. Access to goal setting, the ERS, and other tools to identify and grow your quality practices are all available to you. However, your program will not be eligible for financial recognition through STQ.
- Please note, even though your program may not be eligible for financial recognition through STQ, the teachers in your program may be eligible for individual recognition through IdahoSTARS professional development registry or training, academic and CDA scholarships.

12. Steps to Quality sounds great! I think my participation could support my quality improvement efforts. What should I do next?

This is great news! We hope you experience STQ as a wonderful way to capture all the hard work you are investing in your relationship with your MDT coaches and in growing the quality in your program. Work closely with your MDT coaches. They will partner with you as you grow in your Steps to Quality and quality improvement journey!

Eligibility and Participation Criteria

Steps to Quality Eligibility Criteria:

1. Operating legally, abiding by all laws outlined by the state of Idaho or by a local jurisdiction (city).
2. Licensed as a childcare provider by the state of Idaho or by a local jurisdiction (city) approved by the state of Idaho to issue a childcare license.
3. The program is not disqualified from participating in the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP).

Steps to Quality Participation Criteria:

1. Maintain regular contact with your regional multidisciplinary team.
2. Engage in the step verification process when verifying the first time or attempting to verify at a higher step.
3. Participate in annual confirmation visits yearly during your anniversary month if no mid-year verification has occurred.
4. Create and update progress on Quality Improvement Action Plans (Steps 1-5).
5. Update staff information in RISE.
6. Notify the regional multidisciplinary team of any change in licensing designation, physical location, director(s) or owner(s).
7. Participate in Environment Rating Scale assessments annually (Steps 2-5).
8. Agree to publish the program's Steps to Quality step on the IdahoSTARS and Idaho AEYC website and on the Parent Referral System through the Child Care Resource Center.
9. Allow data generated and collected through Steps to Quality to be used anonymously for program review and reports.
10. Understand that all awards and bonuses count as income for tax purposes.
11. Understand that all financial recognition is subject to the availability of funds.

ERS Selection Criteria

ITERS-R (0-2.5 YEARS)

No infant/toddler classrooms	No assessment completed
1-4 classrooms	1 assessment completed, selected using random draw (priority given to infant classrooms designated as 1 day-12 months in age)
5+ classrooms	2 assessments completed, selected using random draw (priority for 1 of the 2 assessments given to infant classrooms designated as 1 day-12 months in age)

ECERS-R (2.5-5 YEARS)

No early childhood classrooms	No assessment completed
1-4 classrooms	1 assessment completed, selected using a random draw
5+ classrooms	2 assessments completed, selected using a random draw

SACERS-U (5-12 YEARS)

No school-age classrooms	No assessment completed
1-4 classrooms	1 assessment completed, selected using a random draw
5+ classrooms	2 assessments completed, selected using a random draw

FCCERS-R (0-12 YEARS)

1 family or group childcare	1 assessment completed
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Recognition

Step 1

- Promotion of your program on the IdahoSTARS and Idaho AEYC websites and childcare referrals
- Eligibility for a Successful Start Grant to support improvements in the areas of Business Practices and Health, Safety and Wellness *

Step 2

- Promotion of your program on the IdahoSTARS and Idaho AEYC websites and childcare referrals
- Eligibility for a Quality Improvement Grant to support continued development of quality practices, including materials to assist with successful accreditation *

Steps 3-6

- Promotion of your program on the IdahoSTARS and Idaho AEYC websites and childcare referrals
- Eligibility for Quality Improvement Grants to support continued development of quality practices, including materials to assist with successful accreditation *
- Eligibility for Accreditation Grants to help cover fees associated with national accreditation *
- Annual Recognition based on your licensing designation and verified step at anniversary month, plus Add-ons in three categories: *

*Financial recognition for programs enrolled in STQ is limited to those providing care for children birth-12 years old while their caregiver is at work or school. Head Start facilities and programs serving children in a more limited capacity are eligible for all non-monetary support.

(Recognition continued on next page)

- **Step 3-6 Annual Recognition:**

Step	Family	Group	Small Center	Large Center
Step 3	\$700	\$900	\$1,100	\$1,300
Step 4	\$900	\$1,100	\$1,300	\$1,500
Step 5	\$1,100	\$1,300	\$1,500	\$1,700
Step 6	\$700	\$800	\$900	\$1,000

- **Add-on 1:**

Average percentage of children receiving ICCP in your program during the 12 months before your program's anniversary month

1-25%	\$400
26-50%	\$550
51-75%	\$650
76-100%	\$800

- **Add-on 2:**

Number of teachers in your program enrolled as an IdahoSTARS academic or single-course scholar during the 12 months before your program's anniversary month

Small or Large Center	\$50 per scholar
Family or Group	\$100 per scholar

- **Add-on 3:**

Number of teachers in your program at an Education Pathway Level 2 or higher at anniversary month

Small or Large Center	\$100 per teacher
Family or Group	\$200 per teacher

Annual Recognition and Add-ons are mailed within 30 days following your program's anniversary month.

*Financial recognition for programs enrolled in STQ is limited to those providing care for children birth-12 years old while their caregiver is at work or school. Head Start facilities and programs serving children in a more limited capacity are eligible for all non-monetary support.

Grant Criteria

- Grants are distributed in three distinct categories:
 - Successful Start Grant: for programs with a valid ICCP vendor number who are not enrolled in Steps to Quality, are enrolled in Steps to Quality but not verified at a step or are verified at Step 1 in Steps to quality. This grant funds items and training that support the quality domains of Business Practices and Health, Safety and Wellness.
 - Quality Improvement Grant: for programs verified at Steps 2-6 in Steps to Quality. This grant funds items and training that support quality improvement across all seven quality domains.
 - Accreditation Grant: for programs verified at Steps 3-6 in Steps to Quality. This grant funds fees associated with national accreditation.
- Funding is distributed from Idaho AEYC and counts as income.
- Funding will be reported on Form 1099-MISC.
- Funding is not guaranteed. Grants may be funded in whole, in part, or not at all.
- Recipients cannot profit off any purchases made with grant funding.
- Funding may occur as a direct payment to an education/training entity, into a verified vendor account (such as Lakeshore), or as a reimbursement to the recipient following the submission of receipts.
- Only complete applications will be considered.
- If approved, recipients agree to complete the post-reflection component of the application before being eligible for any future grants.
- Grants are an extension of a facility's Quality Improvement Action Plan and are intended to support quality improvement goals linked to identified quality domains and subcategories.
- The following items are **NOT** funded:
 - Basic operating expenses such as fees for licensing, CPR/Pediatric First Aid training, background checks, and regular maintenance on structures
 - Personnel, building additions, rent, substitute teachers and staff salaries
 - Capital improvements (assets or improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations, or alterations to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life of a facility)
 - Consumables, such as art supplies
 - TV, computer, video equipment and monitors for use in the early childhood classroom
 - Group feeding tables
 - Lofts
 - Play structures for outdoor gross motor space and outdoor surfacing
 - Hands-free air dryers
- For more information about grants, speak with a member of your regional MDT.